

was out of commission, in others the engineer had disappeared or the track was blocked by other trains.

Officers brought complaints that Cheremissov was sabotaging the expedition, advising them to keep hands off the "adventure." I telephoned the general and asked for an explanation. He replied that as a senior officer he had talked frankly with junior officers who came to consult him. If this interfered with my plans, he would withdraw completely until the political situation was cleared up. An hour later he called back and announced, "Mr. Commissar, for your information. Following the order of the Supreme Commander, I have stopped your echelons." I reminded him of Konovalov's appeal, but he replied, "The old government has been deposed. For the time being I must execute the orders of the Supreme Commander. Next, I shall probably assume the Supreme Command myself."

I understood that Cheremissov had been in touch with Kerensky and obtained the order from him to stop resistance to the Communists. Although I had acted in the name of the Executive Committee rather than the government's, I was still the government's Commissar of the Front and could not carry on the operation in opposition to the head of the government. Moreover, I did not know what the relations were now between the Executive Committee and the government and since the night conversation with Gotz, I had had no word from the Committee. I was ready to take responsibility in a political campaign, but I had no desire to start an individual guerrilla war. So I said to the general, "I will not take back my orders. I resign."

After midnight, a delegation of the local Military Revolutionary Committee came to my office. The Committee had learned of my resignation and asked me to remain at my post as the Committee's Commissar of the Front. I replied that I appreciated the confidence of the soldiers but could represent only the All-Russian Executive Committee. The delegates went away disappointed. The Winter Palace was calling. The chief of the political department of the War Ministry, now in the palace, told me the enemy was tightening the ring around the building. Defense forces had dwindled. When would the first echelons from the front reach the capital? I replied that Cheremissov, acting on Kerensky's order, had announced to the troops that the Provisional Government had been deposed and had stopped the operation.

"The government has not been deposed yet . . .," said the voice from the Winter Palace. After a moment's pause it continued, "The cruiser *Aurora* has opened fire. The Bolsheviki have started an assault. If someone calls from here, check his identity. Send troops." The line went dead.